



News

NJ Sen. Lautenberg Diagnosed with Cancer

by WNYC Newsroom

NEW YORK, NY February 19, 2010 —New Jersey Sen. Frank Lautenberg, 86, has been diagnosed with stomach cancer.

Lautenberg will undergo six to eight chemotherapy treatments, in three-week intervals, and is expected to make a full recovery, according to a statement released by his office.

Lautenberg became ill and fell at his home on Monday. Doctors determined he fell because of blood loss from an ulcer. Additional tests found the ulcer was caused by a B-cell lymphoma of the stomach. Lautenberg's health is a matter of political concern for Democrats. If he isn't able to finish his term, Republican Gov. Chris Christie would appoint a successor.

Democrats were already worried about Lautenberg's age before his last election in 2006, says John Weingart of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University.

"It was sort of a quiet concern. It felt, I think, to many Democrats unseemly to bring up, and so it wasn't brought up," Weingart says. "But it would be a significant national development if he had to leave the Senate."

New Jersey Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver says some are likely to be worried about the potential political costs of Lautenberg's illness. "Without question, this coming on the heels of the passing of Sen. [Ted] Kennedy, certainly is probably a thought in the minds of some people," she says.

Still, Oliver is confident in the doctor's positive prognosis: "Senator Lautenberg can be defined as nothing more than the comeback kid," she said.